Red Hand
Chapter 1
By Yu May

“Mom, why do all the superheroes live in New York?” asked Edward, looking up from his comic book.

Before Mom could answer, Edward’s twin sister Eponine interrupted. “They don’t all live in New York, silly. Batman lives in Gotham city.”

Edward rolled his eyes. “Yeah, but Spider-man lives in New York, and the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and the Gargoyles!”

Unfortunately for Edward, Eponine loved to argue. “Yeah, but Superman lives in Metropolis.”

“Metropolis isn’t a real city!”

“Well, neither is Gotham, but my point is they don’t live in New York.”

“Yeah, well *my* point is all the ones who live in a real city live in New York!”

“Do not!”

“Do too!”

Mrs. Emma “Mom” Reynolds ignored her arguing children as she rescued the spaghetti from boiling over. “Knock it off, you two! Or I’ll spank both of you!”

“Yes, ma’am!” chirped the twins, before they both buried their faces in their comic books.

Their older sister, 14-year-old Anne, looked up from her Jane Austen novel with amusement. There was nothing like the threat of a spanking to get the twins to put aside their sibling rivalry and become friends again. Anne couldn’t resist the temptation to tease the twins a bit more, and maybe trick them into starting the argument again. “You know, a lot of those comic book superheroes only live in New York because that’s where the comic book people live. But we’ve got our own real life superhero right here in Milwaukee!”

“Anne! Don’t you provoke them! You’re not too old to join them across my knee!” called Mom’s voice from the kitchen.

“No, ma’am! I’m not provoking them! I was just…making conversation!” answered Anne, burying her face in her copy of *Sense and Sensibility*.

Mom pantomimed the act of spanking three bottoms at once with her wooden spaghetti spoon. “Well, if the conversation turns into another comic book argument, I’ll provide the sound effects! Whap! Thwack! Smack! Understood?”

“Yes, ma’am!” answered all three siblings. During their years as homeschool students, Anne, Edward, and Eponine had learned not to provoke Mom’s wrath, especially when she was armed with a wooden implement of any kind.

Peeking over his comic book, Edward dared to strike up the conversation again. “Anne, about that superhero, do you mean Red Hand?”

With a glance to the kitchen, Anne answered Edward with careful politeness. “No, Edward, I was talking about Barbie Roberts. Of course I meant Red Hand!”

Edward put his comic book away. “But isn’t Red Hand kind of…goofy?”

Eponine put away her Little Lulu comic to rejoin the argument. It was one of the siblings favorite on-going debates. “Nu-uh, I think Red Hand is pretty keen! She’s very beautiful, and she’s for-real, not make-believe!”

In the kitchen, Mom stiffened as she heard the mention of the name Red Hand. The spaghetti she was taste-testing slipped back into the boiling water with a splash.

“Yipe!” Emma howled as a drop of boiling water landed on her hand. “Why do I keep forgetting I’m not invulnerable when I’m not in my Red Hand form?” hissed Emma as she ran cold water over the burn. It had been 14 years since their first daughter was born, and somehow, Mr. and Mrs. Reynolds had managed to keep a certain someone’s secret identity a secret from their children.

Edward’s concerned voice echoed from the living room. “Mom? You okay?”

“I’m fine, sweetie!” answered Emma. “Just have to survive until…”

“Daddy’s home!” squealed Eponine, rushing to the door.

Emma poked her head out of the kitchen, to flash a smile at her one true love. “George? Thank goodness! These three have been bickering about comic book characters for an hour! Be a dear and spank them for me, won’t you? My hands are…full? Ack!” Emma heard the sound of her spaghetti boiling over, and rushed to rescue it.

George Reynolds laughed, before clapping his hands together playfully, pretending to spank each of his kids in turn. “You hear that, kids? Guess I’ve got some spankings to hand out!”

Edward, Eponine, and Anne all laughed, and pretended to squeal in terror. It was an old joke, but they still loved it. Anne covered her bottom as she ran around the couch. “Hey, Mom was arguing too! You should spank her, Dad!”

Dad rubbed his hands together, affecting the look of a dastardly villain as he approached his wife from behind. “Is that so? Well, Emma, what do you have to say for yourself?”

“Don’t you dare, George! I’m carrying spaghetti!”

George made a point of pausing his hand dramatically in mid-air. The second his wife set down the spaghetti, with a sigh of relief, he pretended to spank her, clapping his hands together to create the perfect illusion. Emma roared with delight, and pretended to rub the sting from her behind as if George really had spanked her. “All right! I’m sorry! No more fighting!”

George beamed, as he waved his finger mockingly, as if delivering a stern lecture. “That’s more like it! Now, let’s all sit down for a meal like a respectable family!”

After saying grace, George began the conversation. “So, what began all this comic book argument?”

“Red Hand,” answered both the twins, at once.

“...Again,” added Anne.

Emma nearly choked on her first bite of spaghetti. Ever since she’d accidentally spilled the beans to George, Emma always wondered if she’d given the game away somehow. She’d once left her superhero costume in the closet, only for 3-year-old Anne to drag it out to show her after using Mom’s closet as a hiding spot for hide and seek. There had been several close calls like that over the years.

George flashed a mischievous smile so that only his wife could see. “Oh? And what do you kids think of this Red Hand character?”

Emma answered her husband with a furious look that silently said, *“Thanks a lot, George!”*

Unable to contain herself, Eponine kicked her feet under the table. “She’s the best! Our own superhero, right here in Milwaukee! And her outfit…”

Anne huffed. “Personally, I’m not a fan of her outfit! Why does it have to be skin-tight? It caters to the male gaze!”

Emma felt her face flush, embarrassed by her daughter’s blunt criticism. “Now, Anne! Red Hand doesn’t dress that way to appeal to the male gaze! That’s just feminist clap-trap!”

Anne looked at her mother quizzically. “Well, why else would she dress that way? And how would you know?”

Emma silently kicked herself for her slip of the tongue before answering. “Well, I don’t *know*, but maybe Red Hand dresses that way because…it allows for ease of movement in battle?”

Anne savored a bite of spaghetti before answering with a minxish smile. “Oh? So you don’t mind if I go to the mall dressed in short shorts, then? Those allow for ease of movement too!”

Mom pointed her fork at Anne emphatically. “If you don’t mind letting your friends see a few red handprints on your bottom, you can go to the mall dressed any way you want!”

Dad nodded, before leaning over to smooch his wife on the ear. “Yup! If Red Hand were my daughter, I’d spank her good for running around Milwaukee wearing such an immodest outfit!”

With a thrill, Emma heard her husband whisper, so that only she could hear, “Though, if Red Hand were my wife, I wouldn’t mind so much!”

Emma flushed, brushing her rose-gold hair from her face. Even after 15 years of marriage, she still felt like a giddy high-school girl with a first crush around George. Then she caught sight of her pager buzzing.

“Shoot!” Emma scrambled to snatch up the pager before any of her children could, and read the alert flashing across the screen. A robbery at First Federal Bank?

Edward rolled his eyes. “Ugh! Martial Arts for Moms practice? Again?”

Dad answered in a serious tone. “Edward, don’t use that tone of voice when addressing your mother. Martial Arts for Moms is important to her. How would you like it if I made fun of you for your interests?”

Edward hung his head, feeling censured. “Sorry, sir.”

George put a hand on his son’s shoulder. “You’re forgiven, son.”

Eponine chipped in, curiously. “But, why do they page her at such random times? It’s like they meet with no warning, at any time of day!”

Anne looked up and blinked. “Huh, now that you mention it, that is sort of odd?”

Mom furiously tapped the reply button on her two-way pager. The “Martial Arts for Moms Club” had been another improvisational excuse when 4-year-old Anne had started asking why Mom was always running off at strange times. Bless her little head, Anne had bought the fib unquestioningly for ten years now. But the twins had been starting to ask questions recently.

Emma scrambled to collect her half-eaten dinner, not wanting to set a bad example to her children. “Uh, they did give me a warning, Eponine. It’s my fault! Silly me! Forgot the meeting!”

Dad gracefully intervened, collecting the plate as he gave Emma a wink. “I’ve got it, Emma. You’d better hurry. Wouldn’t want to keep your carpool waiting!”

Even though time was of the essence, Emma couldn’t resist giving George a kiss anytime she had to run off to fight crime. As he returned the kiss, George planted a playful swat on her behind with his free hand. “Go get ‘em, tiger!”

Anne moaned. “Ugh! Dad! Do you always have to do that?”

As Emma rushed to the door, she heard her husband answer, “Yes I do, and I always will, so get used to it.”

George wasn’t lying. When he said he *had* to slap Emma’s rear end every time she left, it was perfectly true. How else was Emma supposed to activate her powers? Emma blushed at the memory of having to ask random strangers to slap her ass before meeting George!

Even as Emma closed the garage door behind her, she felt her powers beginning to activate. Her flabby muffin top disappeared, replaced by toned abs. Having mastered the art of the quick change, Emma cast aside her stay-at-home mom clothes and rushed to retrieve her superhero uniform from the garage cabinet George had prepared for her. She threw off her dainty AA bra in a flourish of red sparks and lightning, and threw on her DD sports bra just in time before her breasts expanded to perfectly fill the new lingerie. As she elegantly pulled her red and white spandex uniform on, her legs lengthened gracefully to match her thigh-high boots, so that she seemed to grow a full foot taller.

As she shook her hair, it blazed from strawberry blond to fiery red!

…the only thing that hadn’t changed much was her plump rear end, though hidden underneath the puppy fat, she now had buns of steel.

As mom-bod Emma Reynolds disappeared, a new amazonian figure took her place: Red Hand!

As was fitting for her namesake, the spandex costume was mostly red, with white boots and gloves, a simple design that owed much to the golden-age design worn by previous generations of superheros. The only cheeky design flourish was a white heart symbol, framing her breasts, and an upside-down white heart framing her rear end. In lieu of a cape, she threw on a mini leather jacket with red and white accents that matched the heart logo that acted as Red Hand’s calling card. Finally, she deftly fitted a red, heart-shaped domino mask to her face.

The garage door seemed to blow open and slam closed in an instant as Red Hand rushed out and up into the air in a streak of red and white, too fast for the human eye to follow.

Emma Reynolds, stay-at-home homeschool mom, had some bank robbers to attend to!